

## MYTHOLOGIZATION OF HISTORY IN ENGLISH LITERATURE BY THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY (JOHN FOWLES, A. BURGESS)

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### ABSTRACT

At the turn of the century the history issue becomes perhaps the most important one. Mythologization is one of the new approaches that emerged during this literature period. In English literature, the most common forms of mythologization are the use of images and the story components of the known myths and the cryptohistory. The cryptohistory allows the authors to suggest the versions of historical event reasons and implement the postmodern principle of plurality within the historical narrative. Such stories are more common in popular literature; The authors of serious novels use this form to create its own concept of historical development. The fabulousness, the unreliability of depicted reality is traditionally accentuated by these types of works. This article discusses one of the most popular history mythologization forms as an example of the British novels during the late twentieth century: "Maggot" by John Fowles and "Any Old Iron" by Anthony Burgess". Despite the fact that both writers refer to different historical epochs (the 18th century of the novel "Maggot" and the First World War of the novel "Any Old Iron") the works use similar techniques and approaches to history.

**Key words:** English literature, mythologization of history, cryptohistory, J. Fowles, A. Burgess

### 1. INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the XX-XXI centuries the situation of the end of the century and the millennium becomes an unprecedented one and perceived as the "end of history". This is evidenced by numerous statements on the subject from the most authoritative science theorists of the late twentieth century. Such as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, Fredric Jameson, Jacques Derrida, Yoshihiro Francis Fukuyama and others. In general, the ideas of these authors may be reduced to the idea, that a classical perception of history as a single process that is objectively reflected in the text of science, is exhausted now.

### 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

M. Foucault points to the erroneous idea of history as a continuous narrative introducing the "gap" concept [1]. J.-F. Lyotard in his work "postmodern condition" (1979) («La condition postmoderne») tells about a modern distrust to all types of "metanarrations" whether it's history, science, religion, etc. Summarizing the views of the French explorer, I. Ilyin writes: "For Lyotard the postmodern age as a whole is characterized by the erosion of faith in "the great metanarratives", in "metastories" legitimizing, uniting and totalizing the concepts of modernity. Today, says Lyotard, we are witnessing the fragmentation, the splitting of the "great stories" and the emergence of many more simple, small, local "stories" [2]. The similar ideas were expressed by the American researcher F. Jameson, who uses the term "dominant codes" [3], but he, unlike Lyotard believes that they retained their influence.

In general we may say that the humanities subject of study becomes the very nature of historical narrative, the reliability of which is doubted. Thus the thing is essentially about the adjustment in the "fictional" history and literature. Considering this problem, J. Reinecke shows the relationship between history and literature, which became the subject of attention for American researchers. She writes: By his work "Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe" (1973) Hayden White found in the writings of the XIX century historians the principles of dramatic composition, a story line, the following to the literary styles and genres. And if LaCapra still sees the border between history and literature, White erases it at all. White and La Capra believed that a novel and historical research give a same true picture of the reality. At that a historical novel is certainly more interesting than the works of a historian. Besides, each author of a historical novel, also carries out a kind of research work in the archives with the same historical documents" [4]. It's not a surprise that this debate led to the actualization of a historical novel and its complete transformation.

The British kind of historical novel is focused on the fictitious unreliability of the pictured reality. In 1988 this type of novel was named by Linda Hutcheon a "Historiographic Metafiction". J. Reinecke in the dissertation "Historical Novel of postmodernism and the genre traditions" notes that his goal is to shake the existing understanding about the history, based mainly on textual evidence, make the reader doubt. Chronologically, the first such novel is "The French Lieutenant's Woman" by J. Fowles (1969). The researcher T.N. Breeva considering a similar type of the novel by the example from Russian literature proves the possibility of calling this type of a novel as historiosophical one, implying that a postmodern historical novel is characterized primarily by the author's view of history that gets an artistic justification. T.N. Breeva said: "The history as a strategy genre, serves as a formal genre developing principle of a historiosophical novel, involves the consideration of history as a text that is structured by an author's historiosophical concept" [5]. The same researcher considers the problem of the history conceptualization in Russian literature [6]. This definition is quite consistent with the peculiarities of the English and postmodern novel concerning the subject of history.

### 3. RESULTS

The English postmodern novel, related to the subject of history may be divided conventionally into several varieties of historical narrative. The mythologized history may be considered as the most important type of this kind of narration, within which different types are distinguished. The history mythologization is being developed.

The first type goes back to the tradition of modernism, which appeal to the mythological structure and which was one of the most important elements of a story, playing a myth cyclicity. The images and narrative components of the famous myths, some mythologems were widely used. At the approaching end of the twentieth century Apocalypse and the image of the world Savior become the important themes. In this respect, the novel of A. Burgess "The End of the World News" (1982) and Graham Swift novel "Waterland" (1983) become interesting. Later a parodic element in this type of literature is enhanced and the reflection on the history image turns from the meaningful to the structural level of the genre. The novel "A History of the World in 10 1/2 Chapters" by Julian Barnes openly declares its postmodern approach to the understanding of history: «History is not what happened. History is just what historians tell us. There was a pattern, a plan, a movement, expansion, the march of democracy; it is a tapestry, a flow of events, a complex narrative, connected, explicable» [7]. The writer not only declares but demonstrates the fictitious character of the narrative claiming for the title of the Great history and personal history. Barnes novel, like most postmodern texts inevitably becomes a parody. As E. Kolodinskaya noted: "Parody (in its broad sense) is perhaps the main stylistic means of a modern novel, since its purpose is not to create a realistic illusion of past events objective reproduction, but to understand the ways and means of establishing such an illusion. One important element concerning the perception of the past by a modern novel is an ironic study of previous literary facts and the study of the novel genre history" [8], [9]. All this fully applies to Julian Barnes novel the only reality of which is "the words and meanings" [8].

The second type of historical myth-making is the creation of the author's mythologized versions of events, opening "a secret meaning" of well-known events, the hidden motives of contemporary or past development. This trend is often referred to as Cryptohistory. This kind of historical narrative is more common in popular literature, but it is also important for the classic literature. Its peculiarity is explained by the fact that in this variant the historical narrative apparently retains the features of a classic historical novel at the beginning and at the middle of the twentieth century, but it is fundamentally different from it by the presence of a story about a "secret meaning" of the events which are happening or happened before.

A striking example of this historical myth-making becomes J. Fowles novel "A Maggot", 1986. Here the author refers to the historical topics, telling about the sect of shakers which was active in England in the XVIIIth century. The main character of the novel, Rebecca, goes through a kind of initiation, and then already outside the plot, according to the author's idea creates a "miraculous child" - Anna. Later this girl became the founder of a new religious movement - Shakers - which, according to the story, was developing mainly within the United States area. "Maggot" is a version of the novel, mythologizing history, a variant of alternative history, the novel, showing the transformation of history into the national mythology. By the novel, the writer reconsiders the existing ideas about history and creates his own myth on their basis. Such a myth-making is performed through the sacralization of a national history and a national space.

J. Fowles outlines two possible ways of a nation development in his novel. The first one comes from the sects and revolutionaries, combining spiritual, mystical and individualistic components (the novel history of the sect shakers origin is related to it). The second way, the state one is in compliance with the law, the worship of titles and hierarchy (this way is represented by the upper classes of the novel - Mr. Askew and His mercy).

The plot is based on a mystical motivation of a new religion origin in England. Mr. Bartholomew and three women, which may be regarded as the goddesses of Celtic mythology (they motivate a "local" membership of a new religion in such a way), help Rebecca, a former prostitute, create their religious theory that, on the one hand, is based on the Christian worldview of the heroine, and on the pagan imagery and rituals on the other hand. J. Fowles turns England into a special place, the place of a true religion origin, like Jerusalem or Mecca.

The motive of a trip becomes the way of a national space inclusion in the novel. On the one hand, the characters are in the way as make the spatial movements, and on the other hand, it's the Path as the characters are transformed spiritually. The motif of a path determines not only the obligatory presence of a biblical context in the work, which immediately transfers it into a mythological plan, but an association with a literary tradition established in the XVIII century and based on the motif of the way («The Pilgrim's Progress» by John Bunyan, "The Canterbury Tales" by Geoffrey Chaucer).

The path of the characters in a novel represents the movement of the characters beyond the historical time and space and the transfer of their destinies in a mystical plan. London becomes the most important center of the novel historical time and space, the city of sin and vice, where heroes go. Stonehenge becomes the connection of the historic and mythologizing plan in the novel. In John Fowles novel "Maggot" this image is presented in the terms of official history and from the point of view of an alternate history. In addition to traditional, J. Fowles introduces in his novel another version of the Stonehenge origin associated with Celtic mythology, the consistency of which is realized through the plot (see [10] for detailed information).

Most of the novel characters are associated with the characters of Celtic mythology, and the connection of Christian and Celtic plans provides the special nature of a new faith as the religion supported by ancient local cults, which provides it with a double meaning as a national religion.

Thus, in his novel "Maggot" George Fowles refers to the mythologized historical image of England, introducing it through the synthesis of the Quakers sect history and Celtic mythology. This allows to update a messianic function the English nation in the novel, claiming the new religion as the only correct and consistent one. At that the writer connects it with the beliefs of the ancient Celts, which again emphasizes the exclusivity of the English land and the nation as the homeland of a new cult.

Another modern accent of Fowles historical stylization provides the significance for female characters, and the simulation of a classic historical narrative creates the effect of authenticity.

A. Burgess novel "Any Old Iron" (1987), which appeals to a broad literary tradition, primarily English one may also be attributed to this group. The theme of the "Iron Age" and its completion due to the efforts of the hero refers a reader to the popular literature, mainly to the fantasy genre. The plot developed on the basis of "one family history" appeals to the epic tradition of the XIXth and the XXth centuries. At the formal level Burgess avoids any experiments, limiting the novelty of his work by content.

The plot outline of the novel almost allegorically represents the situation in the world, as it is seen by the author. A. Burgess remains faithful to the principle of the most significant events of the era display, so the subject of the Russian

Revolution, the World War II, the history of the state of Israel foundation is the background against which a private story unfolds, which determined according to the author, the fates of the world, and put an end to the century of wars<sup>1</sup>. The narrator, who is Jewish, provides the narrative with the illusion of impartiality (similar to Serenus Catebloom in the novel "Doctor Faustus". He also introduces the topic of terrorism. The ideological hero of the novel is Reginald Jones, the carrier of the British national mentality. At that the Russian and Welsh origins of his character, as well as in the characters of his brother and sister are significant and are regarded as very close. The Welsh component of the novel provides a link with the ancient mystical eras. At that the nationalistic context becomes the subject of the author's irony. The Russian component represents the most dramatic moments of the twentieth century history. The messianic function of Britain in the world history is marked by the role of the hero, the savior of the world, which has to be played by Reginald Jones.

Two Johns brothers, the descendants of a Russian and a Welshman, find and then steal from the Hermitage (preventing the Soviet Union from the beginning of the third world war) and then destroy Excalibur - the Arthur's sword. According to another version, that was the sword of Mars, which belonged (before it became the Arthur's sword) to Attila, the Roman Flavius Aetius and the King of Britain Ambrosius Aurelianus. This story is considered as the "internal" reason of the USSR and the worldwide events. The personal history of the Jones family, inscribed by the author in the world history, becomes a mythologized one through the mystical image of the sword, symbolizing the "Iron Age", the model in the XXth century history. The messianic role of Britain role in the world becomes the key ideological model, embodied in a great number of more or less mythological narratives in the literature of the second half of the twentieth century [11].

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Thus, various forms of history mythologization remain the important means of historical issues presentation in modern literature until the end of the twentieth century. The connection of mythological and historical elements, which takes place in the literature of the twentieth century takes on new forms by the end of the century, implementing the idea of postmodern doubt on the reliability of the historical narrative. The deliberate history mythologization in fiction transfers into the sphere of conscious the process of past events interpreting, which remained previously in the creative unconscious. This transition contributes to the history demythologization, which is one of the dominant trends in contemporary culture.

#### CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author confirms that the presented data do not contain any conflict of interests.

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<sup>1</sup>The end of "Iron Age" is historically associated with the end of the "Cold War" resulting from the changes in the Soviet Union.

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